

Marking -

Your paper overall is well written, clearly organised and contains fine insights into the history and functioning of the Aspern organisation. You also show understanding of some of the basic organisational theory + concepts in the literature.

The paper could have been strengthened by more explicit use of older conceptual framework, including citations to specific readings utilised.

Please come and see me about the paper, including use of isomorphism concept and possibilities for publication.

Paper Grade: B+ / A
Term Grade: A

Also charts, appendices are impressive but need to be referenced in body of text.



Case Study on Aspira

Maxine Lisboa

Rutgers University
School of Social Work
Professor Eleanor L. Brilliant
Course: Analysis of Social Welfare Organizations
Spring 1994

8/17/94

Introduction

It has been said that a community can be evaluated by the institutions it has been able to create and maintain. Certainly one measure of the Puerto Rican communities' success in the United States as a whole and on the Eastern seaboard in particular, is to look at one of its foremost national institutions, "Aspira".

Aspira is one of the oldest and most successful institutions in the Puerto Rican community. It has been able to survive and expand over the last three decades of tumultuous social, political, economic and demographic changes in the country.

On the East coast Aspira is well respected by the wider Latino/Hispanic community. It is also recognized by the wider human services community. The Encyclopedia of Social Work, indicates that Aspira, is one of only three human service agencies, that is national in scope, which offers programs to help the Puerto Rican community (p. 429, Encyclopedia of Social Work, 1982).

This case study will focus on the "Aspira Organization" with a specific focus on one local agency, Aspira Inc. of New Jersey, established in Newark, in 1968. This study will provide an analysis of the organizational development, structure, and effectiveness in obtaining financial resources of Aspira. I will examine the environment in which Aspira was founded, and on those social, political, economic and demographic forces which have impacted on its structure, function and effectiveness in surviving over the past thirty years. The main focus however, will be on the present and recent past.

It should serve as a source of information and encouragement as well as source of further questions for study of ethnically and racially diverse human service organizations in America. Additionally, as a member of the Puerto Rican community I would like to encourage others to study the few institutions we have in our community in order to promote the development of others which will effectively target our unique needs. The mission of Aspira is as important now as it has ever been.

Key Questions and Issues

Several key questions to be addressed in this analysis are:

1. How has a locally based community organization developed into an institution with national implications?
2. How has this community based organization survived in the fluid climate of the past 26 years?
3. How has it adapted and changed to meet new and challenging environmental conditions?
4. How has Aspira been able to establish its legitimacy?
5. How has it been able to develop sufficient resources, both economic and human resources to survive?
6. Born out of a social movement, has it been able to retain its' mission?
7. Has it remained constant over the years? What changes have occurred? How have these affected its goals?

Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework which will be used in the analysis include:

Institutional Theory: In order to identify the sources of legitimacy and "institutional isomorphism."

Resource Dependence Theory: In order to analyze the environmental forces which impact on it, economic, social, political and demographic, and

Social Movement Theory: In order to analyze Aspira as an agency that grew out of a social movement during an era of self-help and ethnic empowerment.

Data Sources

The basic data for this case study were derived from a number of sources these include:

1. Interviews of key informants including the current and former Executive Directors; one current Board member, and the Director of Education, National Aspira Association.
2. Analysis of printed reports including minutes of Board meetings, studies, newsletters, proposals, budgets, personnel manuals and annual reports.

Brief History of Puerto Rican Migration

The history of the Puerto Rican migration is critical to an understanding of the history of Aspira. The development of Aspira reflects the struggle of the Puerto Rican people for civil rights and social, political and economic empowerment. Below, I will briefly highlight aspects of the Puerto Rican migration which are important to an understanding of the history of Aspira.

The Puerto Rican community in New York City is one of the oldest and largest Latino communities on the East Coast. Puerto Ricans are the second largest Latino/Hispanic group in the continental United States. Mexicans are the largest.

Since the turn of the century Puerto Ricans have been coming to the U.S. to seek employment opportunities and an improved standard of living. In the years following World War II, the Puerto Rican migration to the United States reached massive proportions. (Puerto Ricans were made citizens in 1917). The 1940 census counted only 70,000 persons of Puerto Rican extraction living on the U.S. mainland; by 1950 the number had increased to more than 300,000 and by 1960 to nearly 900,000 (p.13, Ford Foundation Report, 1984)."

By the 1960's Puerto Ricans comprised the largest Latino population in New York City and on the Eastern seaboard. From an economic perspective, they were also among the poorest. They occupied low paying jobs, and encountered barriers to education due to language differences, discrimination and lack of political representation or political clout as a community. It became clear to the existing Puerto Rican community organizers that in order to

improve conditions, leaders were needed who could advocate for their interests.

Founding of Aspira

It was at this time, that a number of Puerto Rican educators and community leaders who had come together to provide a voice for the problems of the Puerto Rican community decided to take action. They had already established what was called the Puerto Rican Forum, in New York City. In the late 50's, "The Forum" conducted a study which highlighted the many problems in the Puerto Rican community, especially the high, school drop out rate. The key issues that were identified by the members of the Forum for the empowerment of the Puerto Rican community were lack of leadership and the need for educating for the youth. Leadership through education became a key theme for empowerment. They decided to attack these problems through the creation of an organization which would serve as a vehicle for change. Aspira which means "to aspire" in Spanish, was created as this vehicle. It was designed to be a Puerto Rican organization which would provide educational counseling and leadership development for students in order to enable them to attend college to become the future models for the Puerto Rican community. Aspira of New York, founded in 1961, became the vehicle through which this objective could be accomplished.

Within a few short months and years community leaders and educators in other cities with large Puerto Rican populations, facing similar problems, organized to establish Aspira centers in

their cities as well. Newark, New Jersey became the home of the second Aspira agency. It opened its doors in 1968. Simultaneous with the opening of the second Aspira office, a National Aspira Office, then called Aspira of America, was created. It was envisioned as a national lobby for Puerto Rican programs, as well as, a vehicle to further legitimize and develop resources for the local Aspira offices.

Today, Aspira has developed into an association of Aspira "associates," with offices in New York, New Jersey, Illinois, Pennsylvania, Florida, Puerto Rico, and Connecticut, as well as, the Aspira National Office, based in Washington, D.C.

Aspira As A Social Movement Organization

The Aspira organization defines itself as a social movement organization. In its literature it consistently refers to the "Aspira movement," and the various Aspira associates which are its products.

Aspira originated in the 1960's, which was a time of great social movement activity. Student movements, tenants rights, welfare rights, civil rights, voting rights, Black power, and various other social movements were actively on the American scene. In the "Aspira Story" a document prepared on the history of Aspira, it states that:

"While Aspira worked to empower the community, a young, liberal movement of students, community leaders, politicians, and civil rights activists worked by its side, breaking down

the barriers to social justice in the nation. The Civil Rights Act in 1964, the Voting Rights Act in 1965, and the Bilingual Education Act in 1968 reshaped the political and social consciousness of the nation (p.4, *The Aspira Story*, 1991)."

It was also a time which saw new and increased institutional support for social movement organizations. Foundations, churches, business corporations and others began to nurture social movement organizations. Simultaneously government and professional organizations also became involved in supporting these social movement organizations (p.368-375, McCarthy and Zald, 1987).

The founders of Aspira wanted to change the social order and empower Puerto Ricans "to take control of their own destinies." On the island of Puerto Rico, the Independence party professed its "independence" platform. The ideals of freedom, "Puerto Rican power," "power to the people," and "self-determination," were very much a part of the Young Lords Party rhetoric and that of the "Puerto Rican empowerment/Aspira movement."

Environmental Forces Which Propelled The Expansion of Aspira

By the 1960's the climate was right for the creation of Aspira. Several social, economic and demographic trends were emerging which propelled Aspira into existence. New York City was the logical place for its creation. The Puerto Rican community had reached a critical mass. The Puerto Rican leaders were able to document and focus attention on the problems of the Puerto Rican

community in New York City, utilizing the study that had been done by the Puerto Rican Forum. There was a great deal of social movement activity at the time and monies began to become available to support social programs. The social and economic climate was right and the community leaders were ready.

Another important force was the demographic changes which were occurring. Historically, Puerto Ricans entered the United States via New York City where in 1950, 82% of this population lived. However, by 1970, only 59% of the Puerto Ricans remained in New York City (*p.4% Delgado 1987*). Demographers and others who study migration patterns have noted that throughout the sixties while the largest grouping of Puerto Ricans remained in New York City, large numbers of Puerto Ricans had emigrated to other large cities in the New York metropolitan area and beyond. This trend of dispersal to other states has been a critical force leading to the establishment of Aspira centers in the other states. Puerto Rican leaders in these other cities were seeking ways to empower the communities where they now lived. In some cases former New Yorkers who were familiar with Aspira were instrumental in organizing to form Aspira "affiliates," (now called associates), in their new locations.

Following the institutional model of organizational theory, we can apply the theory of "institutional isomorphism," coined by DiMaggio and Powell, to the structure that the Aspira local agencies took on. These local organizations tried to replicate the successful Aspira organizational structure.

DiMaggio and Powells' theory is based on the assumption that organizations exist in "fields" of other similar organizations.

"By organizational field, we mean those organizations that, in the aggregate, constitute a recognized area of institutional life: key suppliers, resource and product consumers, regulatory agencies and other organizations that produce similar services and products. The virtue of this unit of analysis is that it directs our attention not simply to competing firms, as does the population approach of Hannan and Freeman (1977b), or to networks of organizations that actually interact, as does the interorganizational network approach of Laumann, et al (1978), but to the totality of relevant actors (p.148 Dimaggio and Powell, 1983)."

Following this perspective we can hypothesize that the fledgling Aspira agencies, like Aspira Inc. of New Jersey, looked to Aspira Inc. the founding agency, as their model since it was the only other one in their field they could look to for guidance. At the time it was the only one they had to model themselves on, and given its ability to raise funds from the government and private sector, as well as, establish a defined program and serve a good number of youth, it had proven its success. It was a way for the newly forming agencies to mimic an existing and sanctioned structural form. It was logical and rational for the new organizations to emulate the successful one. This process of replication of Aspira associates is part of what is referred to in the Aspira literature as the "Aspira movement".

There are two additional factors which contributed to the mimicking of the original Aspira organization. The first was the development by the Aspira organization of what is called "The Aspira Process"; and the other was the role that the Aspira of America, (today called Aspira Association National Office), played

in supporting the development and adoption of the Aspira "associates." Let us look at these two forces in greater depth.

The Aspira Process

"The Aspira Process," can be viewed in what organizational culturists believe comprises part of the organizational culture of an organization. The Aspira Process encompasses the basic assumptions, cultural norms, values and beliefs of the organization. In most organizations it is not formalized, or consciously passed down, however in the case of Aspira it is a formalized programmatic mandate. It is a unique and formally adopted system of philosophic guidelines which must be accepted by each Aspira associate before they are sanctioned by the national board of directors. It includes both formalized rituals that are part of the process, programmatic components and the adoption of a set of universal Aspira goals.

The Aspira Process requires that each Aspira associate include the following three components as part of their programs:

1. Educational development program which requires the following services:
 - a. Dropout Prevention component,
 - b. a Post Secondary Placement component,
 - c. Tutoring
2. Leadership Development program which requires the following services:
 - a. Aspira clubs (usually in junior and high schools)

- b. Public Policy program
 - c. Youth Congress (usually held annually)
3. Cultural Awareness and Self-Identity which requires
- a. Role Models
 - b. Workshops
 - c. Conferences

In effect, the Aspira process structures a major part of the organizational technology which is unique to the Aspira organization. What is so interesting is that this technology is value laden with Puerto Rican culture, values, norms, and beliefs.

Aspira Rituals

An example of a ritual required by the Aspira Process is the annual "Areyto," ceremony. An "Areyto," (Taino Indian word for celebration of "rite of passage" ceremony), is an annual ceremony to celebrate the induction of the "Aspirantes" or Aspira students into the "Aspira family." They must recite an oath and candles are lit to commemorate their entry into the Aspira "clan". It signifies their acceptance of the Aspira goals and their completion of the Aspira process. It can be conducted in English or Spanish and families witness their induction. It resembles a religious ceremony like the ones celebrated in Puerto Rico, in that it is solemn yet joyful cultural and familial. There are many other rituals associated with the Aspira Process, the Areyto is one that is formalized.

The agency also has a folklore, with heroines and symbols.

The agency logo is the "Pitirre," a bird found only in Puerto Rico and which is known for its unique ability to soar.

Goals For All Aspira Programs

As part of the Aspira process, each associate must also adopt the universal goals for all Aspira programs which are the following:

1. Engender a value for education
2. Engender a value for the important role of a viable Puerto Rican/Latino community through awareness and participation
3. Strengthening a positive self-identity
4. Develop leadership skills
5. Encourage cultural awareness and participation
6. Develop parent awareness of educational programs and policies that affect their children

Each associate in delivering its programs must incorporate these as part of their program goals.

Role of Aspira National Association in Replication of Aspira Nationally

The Aspira National Association was spearheaded by the members of the Board of the Aspira of New York, the founding agency.

"By 1969, Aspira had gone through almost ten years of growth, struggle and development. Based on the findings of two studies by Aspira aimed at defining the current distribution of Puerto Ricans and their status in the communities where they lived, Aspira sought and received support for extending its services on a nation wide scale. The Aspira movement was about to become the Aspira family (p.6 The Aspira Story, 1991)."

In November 1968, the Ford Foundation made a two-and-a-half year development grant of \$650,000 to Aspira of New York to create a national office, Aspira of America. The Field Foundation made a \$25,000 grant for the expansion program. The Rockefeller Brothers Fund gave \$7,500 and the Henry Loeb Foundation gave \$3,500 to support a youth leadership conference. The New York Foundation gave \$10,000 for Aspira's summer program.

By September 1969, Aspira of America had established "affiliate" (now called Associate) agencies in Newark, Philadelphia, Chicago and San Juan (p.5, *The Aspira Story*, 1991)."

In effect the National association was designed to assist in the development of Aspira organizations in the cities where Puerto Ricans resided in great numbers and were facing similar problems. Part of the national office's role was to assist these local groups in forming their Aspiras by helping them to formalize their boards, programs and secure funding. The Aspira process was also required as part of the mandate in developing the local Aspira organizations. The Aspira National office was also the vehicle through which the organizational culture and technology was transmitted.

The Aspira Structure

The founding Aspira agency which was an outgrowth of the Puerto Rican Forum received its legitimacy and sanctioning originally through its parent organization.

"The Board of Directors of the Puerto Rican/Hispanic Leadership Forum (current name), is the policy-making body of Aspira. It has relegated to a fifteen member Aspira committee the direct relationship with the agency's director. The Aspira committees meet with the director whenever necessary to discuss various aspects of the agency's work,' Pantoja said in the annual report of 1962.

"By 1965, Aspira was ready to leave the nest of the Forum and spread its wings to fly on its own. 'The year 1965-66 marked the end of ASPIRA'S period of organization and establishment, and the beginning of a new stage of growth and enrichment,... Through the help of the Puerto Rican Forum, Inc., Aspira sponsor, we have been incorporated, declared tax exempt, and a separate Board of Directors has been organized,' wrote Pantoja, founder and Chairperson of the Puerto Rican Forum, (p.4 The ASPIRA Story, 1991)."

Dr. Antonia Pantoja, is the founder and (feminist) leader who was Chairperson of the Board of the Forum. She has become the foremost organizational heroine and a great deal of organizational folklore has been passed down about her extraordinary charismatic leadership.

Building upon the strength of the dedication and commitment of the founders and the enthusiasm of the Puerto Rican community, and guided by the leadership of Executive Director Antonia Pantoja, Aspira developed cultural programs, started high school clubs, and provided counseling and references' (p.3, The Aspira Story, 1991)."

The organizational values, culture, norms, and beliefs were being formulated as we can see by a quote by an original board member:

"It was important to have a concerted and very focused effort for the students to learn what it is to be Puerto Rican, including some of our history and how to feel good about oneself. That is what Aspira was doing, along with providing role models for the kids,' LaFontaine said.

'It was great fun as we were able to see more kids get caught up with the fever of saying 'hey its not so bad to be Puerto Rican!' (p.3, The Aspira Story, 1991)."

"In Aspira's first year of operation (1961-1962), the founders listed four goals for its leadership workshops:

1. To provide for the students in a group situation the necessary orientation, information and stimulus to enable each student to prepare a sound practical educational plan to achieve his educational desire.
2. To help strengthen the student's ego and self image by awakening interest in and relating him to his cultural background.
3. To develop habits and capacities for self-help in pursuing an educational plan by knowing the resources and how to use them.
4. To stimulate those students with potential leadership capacity to be aware of their responsibilities to their own community (p.3, The Aspira Story, 1991)."

The language of these workshop goals clearly express the concepts, values and beliefs of the Puerto Rican founders and set established the culture of the organization.

Institutionalization

"Aspira began with a staff of seven, a small office at 137 West 72 Street, and a plan to empower the Puerto Rican community by developing the leadership potential of young people.

By 1963 the agency had outgrown its first office, and moved to 296 5th Avenue. Already there were 52 Aspira clubs throughout the city. The agency grew rapidly. By 1964-65, there were 827 students in the Educational Orientation Program, 532 students in the Leadership Development Program, and 137 parents in the Parent Education Program.

The federal Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO) and the New York City Economic Opportunity Committee gave the agency a grant of \$267,000 to open three Aspira borough offices in Brooklyn, upper Manhattan and the Bronx.(p.3. *The Aspira Story, 1991*)."

By 1965, Aspira became a non-profit tax exempt organization and an official entity able to secure funding on its own. Prominent Puerto Ricans who held top posts, and were well respected entrepreneurs and professional persons were recruited to form the Board of Aspira. This was a way of providing legitimacy, prestige and power to the organization.

In order to continue to carry out its mission and goals as well as to ensure its survival by securing grants it formalized its

structure and bureaucratized its operations. This structure became a source of legitimacy and sanction for the organization which / enabled it seek and receive funding to extend its services on a nation-wide scale by creating the Aspira of America (now called Aspira National) office in 1968.

Structure of Aspira Organization Vis a Vis the National Office

As explained earlier in the section on the role of Aspira National Association in the expansion of the Aspira organization, the creation of the National office was made possible through a number of grants made to the Aspira of New York office for such a purpose in 1968. The institutional impact on the evolution of this National office vis a vis the local affiliates is important in an understanding of the organizational structure.

A great deal of conflict and controversy ensued in the evolutionary process of Aspira of America as the national representative of the local agencies.

"In 1968-69, a major part of development and fundraising was set in motion with the establishment of the National Development Committee chaired by Teodoro Moscoso, Chairman of the Board of Commonwealth Oil Refining Company and long time friend of Aspira. Over 20 corporate and labor officials joined together to develop new sources of funding for Aspira of America.

With the hard work of Moscoso and others, funding sources were found and Aspira of America was able to continue its mission of developing youth leadership as the organization entered the 1970's.

Executive Director Louis Nunez said in the 1970 annual report, 'In its second full year of operation as a national office, Aspira of America experienced a year of exciting and encouraging growth. The five affiliates placed a record number of Puerto Rican students in college, involved 6,810 students in the Aspira program, and raised \$747,563 in private contributions to support the program (p.5, The Story of Aspira, 1991).

"Aspira of America was doing well, gaining financial support and recognition. Through the seventies, the organization focused on two areas: advocacy work and fundraising for developing national programs.

The Health Careers Program, first launched by Aspira of New York in 1970 with a \$10,000 grant from the Klingenstein Foundation, became a national program in 1971 when Aspira of America received a grant of \$75,000 from the National Urban Coalition (p.6 The Aspira Story, 1991)"

Bilingual education was the key issue Aspira advocated for in the 1970's. In 1972, the Puerto Rican Legal Defense and Education Fund (PRLDEF) filed a suit in the United States District Court against the Board of Education of the City of New York on behalf of fifteen school children and their parents, Aspira of New York, Inc., Aspira of America, Inc. and other organizations. The suit resulted in court mandated bilingual education programs in the school system through the Aspira Consent Decree (p.5, The Aspira Story, 1991).

This successful advocacy effort brought national recognition and legitimacy to Aspira, however the rift between the local and National office was deepening.

Conflict In Roles Of Local and National Office

According to The Aspira Story, which is a historical document prepared to commemorate the 30th anniversary of the Aspira movement, there began to surface a conflict in roles between the national office and the local offices.

"The late seventies brought a realization that Aspira of America, no longer in its childhood, must change and grow as an organization. The nation was suffering the turmoil of an economic crisis that strangled the flow of government financial support available in earlier years. This led Aspira to target its fundraising efforts towards the private sector and the community. In addition to this financial crisis, Aspira of America faced an organizational crisis as well. The local and national offices disagreed about their respective roles (p.5 The Aspira Story, 1991).

In 1983, Dr. Rosario became the fourth National Executive Director. He inherited a organization which was in financial crisis having lost certain large grants, and which was still in the middle of internal conflict over roles and perceived completion with the affiliates.

In April of 1988, he prepared a 34 page internal document entitled, Aspira's Organizational Development, Accomplishments:

Reflections 1983 - 1988, which documents the nature of the conflict, the problems it caused and how it was ultimately resolved.

In Dr. Rosario's analysis of the conflict between the local and national office several factors were identified. One of the problems identified in his report was that while Aspira's mission, goals, and programs during its first decade remained deeply rooted, gradually over time several associates perceived that each had its own mission. In some instances he states that the mission was forgotten or became unclear (Rosario Report, 1988).

"Individual affiliate missions logically led to goals and programs which were deemed necessary to attain those missions. Fragmented, each affiliate began to acquire a separate identity. For example, an affiliate (associate) saw itself as an educational agency and minimized leadership development because it was no longer 'relevant.' Another affiliate saw itself as a 'juvenile delinquency prevention' program because its funds came from a related Justice Department funding source. Yet another was seen as a social service agency (Rosario)."

This is a clear example of how limited resources available for survival at the local levels can lead to external control and a weakening of the original mission and goals. Agencies found themselves stretching their mission and goals so as to be able to acquire sources of funding that may have been outside of their original ones. They had to go beyond their niche to survive. Their mission was transformed to survival.

Another source of conflict was the domination of the Aspira of America board by members of the Aspira of New York board. Their members outnumbered the members representing the other affiliates combined. "This situation was a source of continued organizational instability because New York board members served in dual roles, controlling both New York and "America."

In addition, another major drawback of the structural arrangement of the national board was that it sought to establish direct administrative control and supervision of the new affiliates through the national executive director. The issues of control and influence were of substance, since through most of its early years Aspira of America was able to successfully attract significant sums of money from funders, and distribute these funds to affiliates. In retrospect, it appears that the initial structure and processes were inherently contradictory: that is, endeavoring to foster local initiative and leadership while attempting to establish central control of the affiliates. While this function of Aspira of America was conceptualized as the national office of the 'Aspira Association' it in fact became a separate, often competing entity (Rosario)."

Resolving The Conflict

After a period of assessment and reflection discussions were held to figure out a solution. Slowly with the help of several key board members, and local executive staff they devised a plan to

ameliorate the "institutional and financial crisis and to establish a base for growth. These were:

1. Clarify the Association philosophy, mission and goals.
2. Clarify the role of the national office.
3. Resolve the seventh entity perspective. (National as a seventh competitor)
4. Develop a one Aspira association vision among the Aspira members and alumni.
5. Resolve the level of conflict among the national board delegates.
6. Transform the board from a group of delegates representing usually only local interests to a national board with a broad national vision as well as local interest,
7. Increase the level of trust and confidence between local and national staff and improve our personal and written communications with associates staff.
8. Resolve the perceived conflict with associates in our fundraising efforts.
9. Seek a truce with Aspira of New York
10. Resolve the national office cash-flow problem
11. Resolve the grave problem of late program transfer payments to associates.
12. Eliminate the "America's" financial deficit
13. Resolve the \$89,000 debt to the Justice Department
14. Resolve the national staff morale problem

15. Provide special technical assistance to Aspira of Florida during its survival crisis.
16. Determine where the national office should be located geographically to effectively achieve the Aspira mission and goals.
17. Increase technical assistance to the associates.
18. Re-establish Aspira's credibility with national level corporations, foundations, and organizations.
19. Establish an annual plan and budget process based on the needs of the associates and the national office (Rosario, 1988).

Paramount to the resolution of the institutional crisis was the need to clarify the Aspira Association philosophy, mission and goals and the role of "America" within that framework. Countless hours between 1984 and 1986 were devoted to this topic by all involved parties. After much disagreement, debate and reflection, a consensus was achieved:...While each associate varies in the phrasing of the philosophy, mission and goals, the substance is the same:

Philosophy: Belief in the community's ability and potential to find solutions to socio-economic problems.

Mission: To Contribute to the socio-economic development of our community through our youth.

Goals: -To develop the leadership and personal potential of our youth so that they contribute to the development of our community;

-To develop the intellectual and educational potential of our youth, and;

-to advocate for institutional change on behalf of our youth

The next step was to clarify the issue of local and national roles. In an attempt to do this the status of the local "affiliates" was changed to reflect their associate status. They now became associates not affiliates symbolizing there equal stake in the association.

In an effort to resolve the perceived fundraising conflict of interest with the associates, especially with New York, in 1985 a study was undertaken which generated a report, Mirando Hacia el Futuro: A National Office Relocation Feasibility Study for the Aspira Association. The fact that both Aspira of America, and Aspira of New York, were both located in Manhattan was a source of competition and confusion for some funding sources. In the report it recommended a move for Aspira of America, now renamed Aspira National Association, to Washington, D.C. where the executives and staff could have easier access to the Washington policy makers to advocate on behalf of the association (Rosario, 1988).

By 1988, under Dr. Rosario's leadership, the fiscal crisis was resolved and the internal organizational conflicts were on their way to resolution. The organization could refocus its attention on its mission and goals.

Aspira Inc. of New Jersey

Introduction

Now, that I have analyzed the climate, environmental forces and interorganizational relationships that surrounded the creation of Aspira and its subsequent development into a national organization with associates in six states and Puerto Rico; I will focus in on Aspira Inc. of New Jersey and its resource development challenges and strategies over the recent past.

Key Issues

I have identified two major issues which Aspira Inc. of New Jersey has had to grapple with and adapt to in order to survive. Not only have these two issues had a significant effect on Aspira of New Jersey, but these same two issues are critical ones for the entire organization. The implications of these extend to the entire institution and its philosophy, mission and goals, as well as its structure and function. These two issues are: funding and demographic changes in the Latino population. Aspira's adaptability to these two major challenges will determine its future.

There are many more issues with which Aspira Inc. of New Jersey has had to grapple with in order to survive. Their headquarters is in Newark, a city with a current two term Black mayor, who succeeded a four term Black mayor and where all programs to stay alive must ensure ~~their~~^{their} status with the "city fathers." There are many challenges for a non-black minority program to get

recognition and rewards in this type of political climate. Additionally, the Governors of New Jersey have been slow in recognizing the Latino population's contributions and needs. Furthermore, there are few Latino elected officials and even fewer in state elected or appointed positions. There are other Latino programs in the city for which their is limited funding and who at times find themselves competing with Aspira for foundation and corporate sponsorship. I could go on, however I have selected the aforementioned two issues because they appear to be the best examples of concerns which have forced Aspira to adapt in ways that could be well documented and will continue to challenge the agency for years to come. Additionally, these issues and the way that Aspira has dealt with them reflect the trade offs and challenges that other non profit and ethnically and racially diverse non profits have faced and will continue to face in the future.

Interestingly, it appears that Aspira Inc. of New Jersey has been quite flexible in handling these challenges which could have jeopardized their continuation. In my opinion, Aspira has been fortunate to have had extraordinary leadership which has responsibly and professionally tackled the most difficult and delicate issues with which it has been confronted.

Brief History of Aspira Inc. of New Jersey

Aspira Inc. of New Jersey, was founded in 1968 by a group of committed Puerto Rican leaders in Newark, who were concerned about the same issues which were documented by the leaders who founded

the New York Aspira some seven years earlier; an alarming drop out rate for Puerto Rican students, a sense of hopelessness for Puerto Rican and other Latino youth and a set of socio economic conditions which were daunting (Annual report 1978).

Replicating their forbearers, they organized a Board of Directors including prominent educators, lawyers, and other professionals and set out to break the grim cycle of poverty through education and leadership development (Aspira, Inc. Annual report 1979).

Highlights from the late 1970's to the Present

In the 1979 annual report, the Executive Director, Ms. Grizel Ubarry documented in her message that,

"We are caught in a vicious inflationary spiral which depletes already scarce resources. Federal support for educational programs is under increasingly severe pressure. Local support is not keeping pace with needs.' ...She later indicates that 'Aspira has taken the lead in representing the needs of the Puerto Rican communities throughout New Jersey" (Annual Report 1979).

These two quotes, have been selected to demonstrate the focus on the two major challenges, Aspira has had to face in recent years. First, there is a constant need to raise funds for the agency, especially as government funds become more and more difficult to get. Second, in this '79 report the focus is still on the Puerto Rican community, however as years go by Puerto Rican students were beginning to become more difficult to recruit and retain as other

Hispanics began to increase their presence in Newark and the other cities in which Aspira has centers. The Aspira literature as yet does not reflect this challenge but in the successive reports the language slowly begins to reflect the impact of the other Hispanics in the programs and subsequently the Aspira leadership has to decide what it will do philosophically and programmatically to accommodate this changing clientele.

Budgetary Constraints: New Adaptations

At the writing of the '78-'79 annual report, Aspira had two extension centers in addition to the Newark center, one in Hudson County in Jersey city, and one in Passaic, Passaic County. The Hudson County Center was funded by the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration, and the Passaic Center was funded by a federal Talent Search grant. In subsequent years both centers lost their grants. The Passaic center was closed in 1981, due to the loss of the federal grant. However, the Director reported that Aspira maintained a presence in Paterson and Passaic with funds provided by another federal grant, the Public Health Service. The Aspira counselor worked out of Passaic County Community College to serve students in attendance at the college and in the area's high school (Annual Report 1981). This was an excellent compromise. The agencies presence was maintained and through interorganizational cooperation was able to continue services. Eventually in 1982, the Talent Search grant was restored and the Passaic center reopened.

I have analyzed the budgets for a 17 year period, while there is a modest decrease during certain periods, the budget was

maintained level at approximately 450,000 until fiscal year 1988 when a new Director took charge, restructured and increased the budget to approximately \$650,000. It has increased each subsequent year to date (see chart appendix).

While Aspira was able to maintain a fairly level total budget, for approximately a ten year period from '78 to '88, in effect, it represents a reduction because each succeeding year the same dollars buy less. The impact of this level budget is reflected in the numbers of students served each year by Aspira during this time period. Back in the 1978 report, Aspira indicated it served over 2,500 students, each subsequent report indicated that they served fewer students.

During the tenure of Ms Ubarry, there were many budget crises and crunches. Her time also coincided with some of the most bitter conflicts between "America" and the affiliates. By the time she left in 1983, the agency had lost the Hudson County funding in addition to the Passaic center. However, they also were able to maintain some service provision by working out an arrangement with Hudson County Community college. (I was on the board of Directors of the agency from 1981 to 1983 during part of Ms. Ubarry's time).

A New Approach

In the 1982 - 1983 annual report, the new "Chief Executive Officer," Ms. Maria Vizcarondo DeSoto reported that, "1983 was a very significant year for Aspira....Aspira's effectiveness and relevancy was reinforced as a result of an independent national study done by the Coca Cola USA which addressed Hispanic concerns.

In the survey, respondents were asked to 'identify the organization which has been most effective in meeting the needs of the Hispanic community.' Aspira took the lead as the most effective Hispanic organization, nationwide!"(Annual Report 1983).

This was a clear source of legitimacy for the organization as a whole and an example of how Aspira was clearly having an impact on a national level. This study was quoted on many occasions and I personally remember hearing about it at the annual Aspira fundraising luncheon which I attended that year.

Aspira of New Jersey was taking full credit for the acclaim Aspira was getting.

In interviewing Ms. Vizcarrondo De Soto for this case study, I asked her what strategy she used in securing more consistent funding for the agency. She indicated that during her tenure she doubled the Corporate giving by aggressively soliciting donations for the Annual Fundraising luncheon, and she organized a committee of sponsors to raise funds for the purchase of a building.

Under Maria's leadership Aspira was reorganized in a very interesting fashion. She changed the role and reporting lines of the extension center Coordinators and the program staff, from the Executive Director to the newly named Programs Director. Formerly it was a traditional Deputy Director position which had primary responsibility for the programs, but also some fundraising and administrative responsibility. She also worked with the board to formulate Board committees which had specific responsibilities, ie. development, finance and programs. Symbolically, she had the

Executive staff, including fiscal and secretarial, moved to one side of the floor and had the programs staff moved to the opposite side.

In my analysis, the goals of the agency were going through a transition, according to the vision of its leadership. The goal at this time under her early administration were to increase the budget and ensure Aspira's survival. In particular, Maria wanted to raise the level of funding from corporate and foundation sources as well as, community sources like the alumni, because she wanted to change the agencies resource dependence on government monies which dictated the clientele. She specifically pointed out that certain grants required her to serve all Newark residents and this made it difficult to target Latinos. The grants were dictating the agency focus. She wanted to consciously avoid this external domination to the extent possible.

Ms. Vizcarrondo was successful in both of these endeavors. The fundraising campaigns yielded almost 200,000 more than the previous year. Moreover, she organized a capital campaign and raised enough money to purchase a building in Newark before she left in 1988.

During Ms. Vizcarrondo's tenure, the demographic changes began to be felt more acutely. The other Hispanic population in Newark and in all of the other areas Aspira drew its students from, were in large numbers, joining the Aspira clubs, attending Aspira programs and applying for jobs at the office.

Maria took the first bold step by hiring an Ecuadorian man as her second in command, the Programs Director. The agency had really never hired a non Puerto Rican in a visible position. There were other Hispanics, whites and Blacks who held other non public positions but this was a first.

Additionally, the Board of Directors had begun to grapple with the changing ethnicity of the students being served. It was a source of disagreement and concern. How would they deal with this situation?

Action was taken on two levels. First Aspira undertook a study "two year study in Newark to determine the characteristics of the families, students and institutions in the community that foster or prevent attrition (annual report 1986)" Puerto Rican students had the highest drop out rate and this report would shed some light on ways they could direct their programming to retain these students in the school system from where they were recruited for Aspira programs (Annual Report 1986). Secondly, the annual goals of the agency began to reflect objectives to increase the number of Puerto Rican students participating in the various programs.

In each of the subsequent annual reports that I read the language began to change. Latinos or Hispanics were referred to more consistently and unlike what the first director "indicated was the efforts to take action on behalf of the Puerto Rican community, the Latino/Hispanic community was now being referred to consistently. The agency while recognizing the need to extend its

services to all Hispanics, retained its' Puerto Rican focus by encouraging it staff to more consciously recruit Puerto Ricans.

Expansion Continues

By 1988, a new Director was in place, Ms. Hilda Rosario, she had worked at Aspira of New York as a Health Careers Counselor when first out of college and therefore was familiar with the Aspira mission.

Under her leadership Aspira was able to expand to the south. Two new centers were opened in Trenton, Mercer county and Camden, Camden county. These two areas were still areas with predominant Puerto Rican communities. Their student bodies increased the number of Puerto Rican being served by the Agency. Though economic climate was still not favorable the budget was increased under Hilda's tenure.

Aspira Today

Hilda, left in 1992, and a new director was hired who only lasted a year. He by far had the shortest tenure of any director. The former Programs Director, Mr. Roberto Del Rios, a graduate of Rutgers University Graduate School of Social Work, and a five year veteran of the agency was promoted to Executive Director.

Conclusion

Aspira of New Jersey has been around now for over 26 years. It has sucessfully adapted to two of its most pressing issues, funding and changing demographics.

It took a new Executive Director to transform the goals and restructure the agency in order to develop a more fruitful fund

raising strategy which yeilded a significant increase in unrestricted funds and corporate and foundation dollars.

Philosphically, according to the new Executive Director it is "consistent and morally right" for Aspira to serve other Hispanics, as well as, Puerto Ricans. Moral or not no agency can survive without sufficient clientele. Aspira will survive, with its willingness to transform it goals and adapt to the environment which surrounds it. Let us hope the funding environment will improve as well.

Appendix

ASPIRA INC. OF NEW JERSEY, BUDGETS

17 Year Period

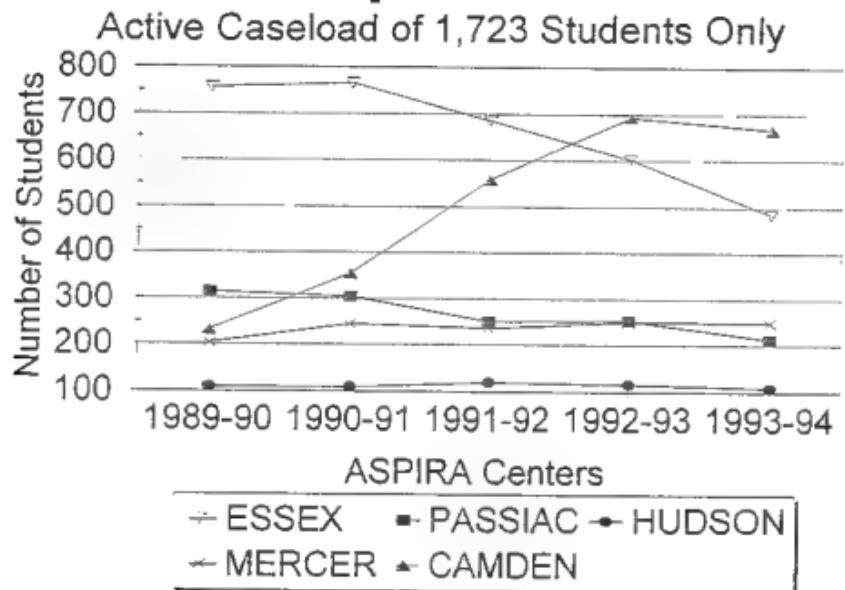
Fiscal Year	Gov't Grants	Transfers from America	Foundations and Corps.	United Way	Misc.	Total Unrestricted	Total Restricted	Grand Total
94 - 95*			246,560	85,300		329,167	633,995	963,162
93 - 94			170,500	50,250		350,326	615,067	965,393
92 - 93			161,050	37,300		452,972	688,120	908,767
91 - 92			164,575	34,475		252,747	661,810	934,215
90 - 91	287,596	70,898	337,736	103,946	9,617	259,349	546,250	809,793
89 - 90	243,975	100,760	314,565	119,178	11,427	213,142	566,783	789,905
88 - 89	Data Not Available							
87 - 88	243,233	89,311	214,496	96,420	5,888	186,046	463,302	649,348
86 - 87	133,416	93,568	136,739	91,624	3,556	137,616	321,287	458,903
85 - 86	146,426	76,387	175,562	40,083	None	94,573	340,685	438,458
84 - 85	191,533	89,899	139,995	43,457	16,737	123,885	354,411	484,557
83 - 84	228,857	85,459	136,105	39,087	10,773	134,118	362,945	520,281
82 - 83	149,025	108,458	140,067	31,405	18,820	131,768	305,541	452,931
81 - 82	Data Not Available							
80 - 81	91,931	143,961	218,518	34,634	2,802	177,815	314,031	491,840
79 - 80	Data Not Available							
78 - 79	197,429	151,218	56,490	27,519	5,556	92,428	360,745	453,173

* Budget Projection

** Blank Spaces Indicate Information Not Available

*** All Figures Taken From Annual Reports

Student Population Served



Student Population Served Active Caseload Only

	ASPIRA Center					
	ESSEX	PASSIAC	HUDSON	MERCER	CAMDEN	TOTAL
1989-90	756	314	110	203	232	1615
1990-91	766	304	110	245	354	1779
1991-92	685	251	119	236	558	1849
1992-93	602	252	116	250	693	1913
1993-94	485	213	109	249	667	1723
TOTAL	3294	1334	564	1183	2504	8879

Student Population Served (Gender Breakdown)

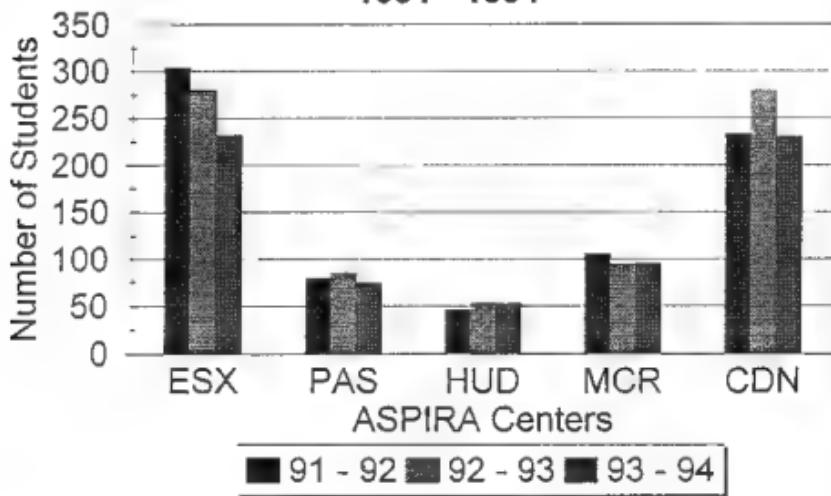
Active Caseload Only (1991-94)

ASPIRA Centers	PROGRAM YEAR					
	91 - 92		92 - 93		93 - 94	
	MALE	FEMALE	MALE	FEMALE	MALE	FEMALE
ESSEX	304	381	280	322	232	253
PASSIAC	80	171	85	167	74	139
HUDSON	46	73	53	63	53	56
MERCER	106	130	94	156	95	154
CAMDEN	233	325	279	414	230	437
SUBTOTAL	769	1080	791	1122	684	1039
TOTAL	1849		1913		1723	

Student Population Served

Active Caseload of Male Students Only

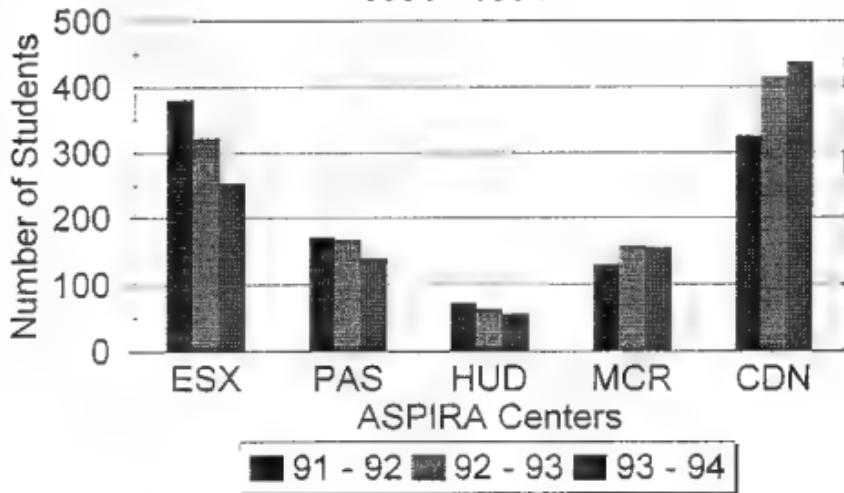
1991 - 1994



Student Population Served

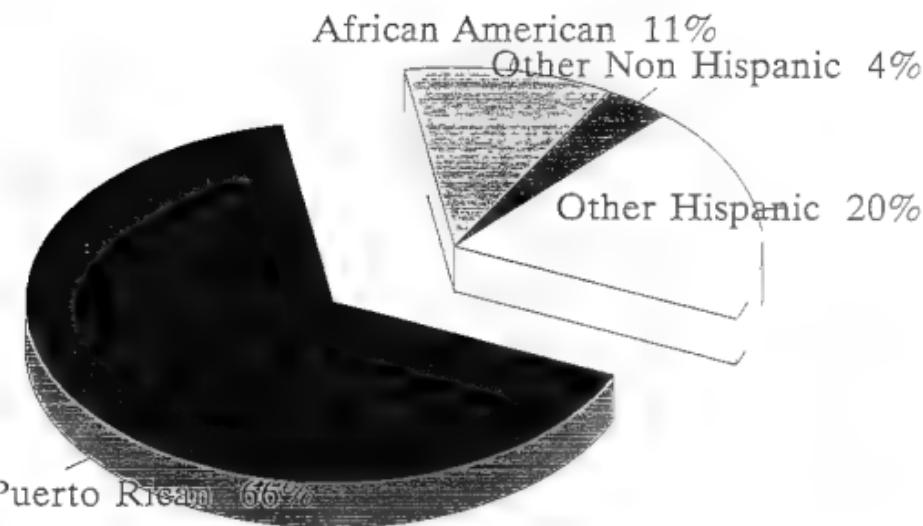
Active Caseload of Female Students Only

1991 - 1994



Student Population Served (Ethnic Breakdown)

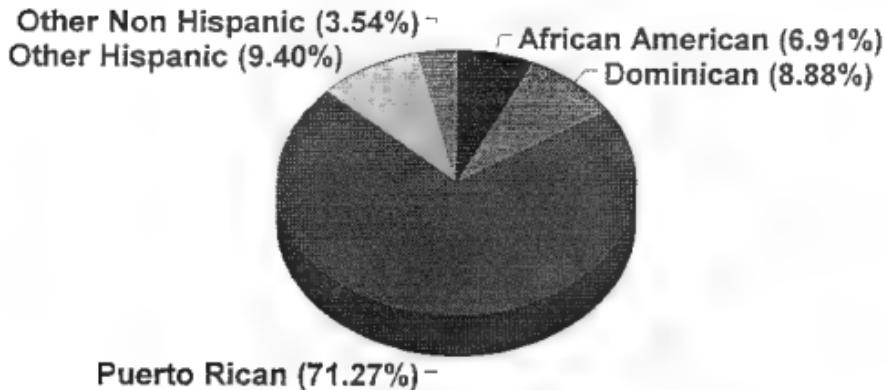
Active Caseload Only (1992-93)



Student Population Served

Ethnic Breakdown

**Active Caseload of 1,723 Students Only
(1993-94)**



Student Population Served (Ethnic Breakdown)

Active Caseload Only (1992-93)



ASPIRA Center	ESX	PAS	HUD	MCR	CDN
African American	69	9	13	37	84
Cuban	5	0	1	0	1
Dominican	28	64	28	5	23
Puerto Rican	397	102	35	183	541
Other Hispanic	57	53	23	20	28
Other Non Hispanic	64	3	5	3	6

ASPIRA Center



Ethnic
Student Population Served (Gender Breakdown)
Active Caseload Only (1993-94)

	ASPIRA Center										TOTAL
	ESSEX	%	PASSIAC	%	HUDSON	%	MERCER	%	CAMDEN	%	
African American	21	4.33%	1	0.47%	10	9.17%	24	9.64%	63	9.45%	119
Dominican	16	3.30%	81	38.03%	22	20.18%	10	4.02%	24	3.60%	153
Puerto Rican	363	74.85%	84	39.44%	38	34.86%	197	79.12%	546	81.86%	1228
Other Hispanic	66	13.61%	38	17.84%	21	19.27%	13	5.22%	24	3.60%	162
Other Non Hispanic	19	3.92%	9	4.23%	18	16.51%	5	2.01%	10	1.50%	61
TOTAL	485	100.00%	213	100.00%	109	100.00%	249	100.00%	667	100.00%	1723

Student Population Served (Family Income Breakdown)

Active Caseload Only (1993-94)

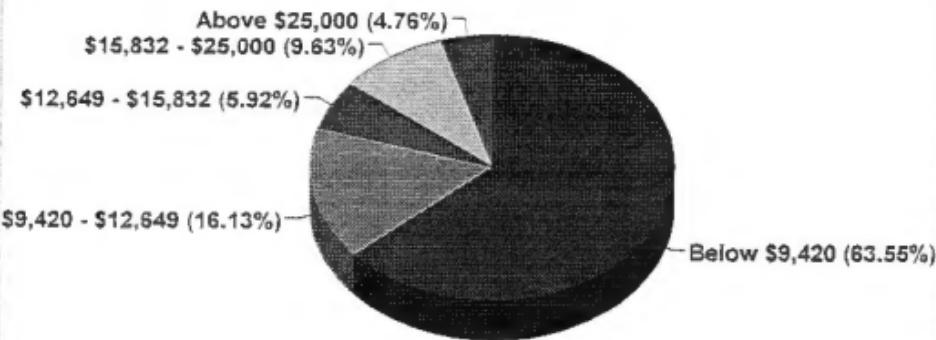
	ASPIRA Center										
	ESSEX	%	PASSIAC	%	HUDSON	%	MERCER	%	CAMDEN	%	TOTAL
Below \$9,420	274	56.49%	70	32.86%	28	25.69%	173	69.48%	550	82.46%	1095
\$9,420 - \$12,649	114	23.51%	72	33.80%	30	27.52%	14	5.62%	48	7.20%	278
\$12,649 - \$15,832	33	6.80%	31	14.55%	11	10.09%	9	3.61%	18	2.70%	102
\$15,832 - \$25,000	44	9.07%	29	13.62%	34	31.19%	22	8.84%	37	5.55%	166
Above \$25,000	20	4.12%	11	5.16%	6	5.50%	31	12.45%	14	2.10%	82
TOTAL	485	100.00%	213	100.00%	109	100.00%	249	100.00%	667	100.00%	1723

Student Population Served



Family Income Breakdown

**Active Caseload of 1,723 Students Only
(1993-94)**



ASPIRA Activity Breakdown by County 1993 - 1994

ASPIRA Centers	ASPIRA ACTIVITIES					
	CLUB MEETINGS	WORKSHOPS	FIELDTRIPS	CONFERENCES	PRESENTATIONS	OTHER
ESSEX	80	34	8	7	9	138
PASSIAC	28	4	0	6	1	39
HUDSON	26	18	5	4	1	54
MERCER	65	10	9	4	2	14
CAMDEN	66	27	10	5	24	20
TOTAL	265	93	32	*7	37	265

* Unduplicated Count



ASPIRA Activity Breakdown

1993 - 1994

